

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 SAM-01 IO-13 PC-01 EB-07 TRSE-00

COME-00 IGA-02 AGR-05 /111 W  
----- 060987

R 191020Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4354

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY ALGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NIAMEY 3300

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, NG

SUBJECT: NIGER -- AN ASSESSMENT

1. HERewith A FEW THOUGHTS AS I LEAVE NIGER ON WHERE  
IT IS AND WHERE WE ARE:

I FEEL SAFE IN STATING WITH SOME SATISFACTION  
THAT THE PICTUREFOR NIGER AND US-NIGER RELATIONS  
IS BRIGHT AND CLEAR.

2. WE AND NIGER HAVE COME A LONG WAY SINCE APRIL 1974  
WHEN AORoup OF MILITARY LEADERS TOOD OVER A DESPARATELY  
POOR COUNTRY IN THE THROES OF A DROUGHT. THE NEW LEADERS'  
EXPERIENCE IN DOMESTIC ANF FOREIGN AFFAIRS WAS MINIMAL,  
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THEIR INSTINCT WAS NATIONALISTIC, THEIR TRAINING

FRENCH AND THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE US UNKNOWN.

3. IT WAS A TIME TO FEEL OUR WAY WHILE THE NEW GOVERNMENT SETTLED IN.

4. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SHAKY MOMENTS, PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE AND HIS MIX OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ASSOCIATES ARE NOW SOLIDLY IN CONTROL AND PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL STABILITY IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE ARE GOOD.

5. UNLIKE SOME OF HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES IN OTHER COUNTRIES, KOUNTCHE HAS TURNED OUT TO BE A SERIOUS, HARD-WORKING, INTENSE, AUSTERE, PRAGMATIC LEADER, ESCHEWING DEMAGOGUERY AND FAVORING MODERATE POLICIES.

6. ALTHOUGH NIGER HAS NOT FULLY RECOVERED FROM THE DROUGHT AND IS STILL DIVERTING RESOURCES TO MEET FOOD NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS DRAWN UP A THREE-YEAR PLAN AND WITHIN THE LIMITS OF ITS HUMAN AND OTHER RESOURCES IS SERIOUSLY ENGAGED IN THE BUSINESS OF DEVELOPMENT. IT INSISTS THAT IT MANAGE THIS DEVELOPMENT ACCORDING TO ITS OWN POLICIES AND PRIORITIES. WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK IT HAS WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE MANY FOREIGN DONORS TO DESIGN AND GET UNDERWAY AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF PROJECTS.

7. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS ESTABLISHED ITS CREDENTIALS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS AND BECAUSE OF HIS REALISTIC, RATIONAL VIEWS, KOUNTCHE HAS BEEN ACCEPTED INTO THE OLD BOYS CLUB OF OUPHOUET-BOIGNY AND SENGHOR WHO HAD CLOSE TIES WITH KOUNTCHE'S PREDECESSOR. KOUNTCHE HAS SOUGHT TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE VARIOUS AFRICAN FACTIONS AND WHILE HE TENDS PUBLICLY TO SIDE WITH THE SO-CALLED PROGRESSIVES HE DOES NOT HIDE HIS DISLIKE FOR HARLINE AND DOGMATIC POSITIONS WHICH HE FEELS ARE DIVIDING AFRICA AND OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SOVIETS TO EXPLOIT. HE GOES ALONG WITH MOST ARAB POSITIONS BUT FEELS NIGER IS GIVING MORE THAN IT IS GETTING. HE FEARS LIBYAN SUBVERSION AND QUESTIONS ALGERIAN INTENTIONS;  
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HE FEELS DEFENSELESS AGAINST THESE MORE POWERFUL NEIGHBORS BUT DOES NOT HESITATE TO STAND UP TO THEM WHEN HE CONSIDERS NIGER'S INTERESTS THREATENED.

8. AS FOR OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, WE STARTED TWO YEARS AGO WITH A GOVERNMENT WHICH KNEW LITTLE ABOUT US. TODAY OUR RELATIONS ARE EXCELLENT--WE HAVE EASY ACCESS TO KOUNTCHE AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS THEY HAVE COME TO

TRUST US AND TO VALUE OUR EFFORTS. THEY ACCEPT THE FACT WE HAVE NO ULTERIOR MOTIVES AND ARE HERE SOLELY TO HELP NIGER DEVELOP. ON A SCALE PROBABLY UNUSUAL FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN MILITARY LEADERS, THE PRESIDENT OCCASIONALLY TAKES US INTO HIS CONFIDENCE ON MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE TO HIM. ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES WE USUALLY PART COMPANY BECAUSE OF AFRICAN IMPERATIVES WHICH NOGER DOES NOT FEEL STRONG ENOUGH TO IGNORE. HOWEVER, WE CAN AND DO CARRY ON A DIALOGUE AND WHEN WE MAKE CLEAR THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ISSUE TO US, THE GOVERNMENT TAKES OUR VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT IN COMING TO A DECISION AS IT DID LAST YEAR ON KOREA.

9. OUR DIALOGUE IS ESPECIALLY PERTINENT AND PRODUCTIVE IN THE DEVELOPMENT FIELD WITH A GOOD GIVE AND TAKE-- AS WAS DEMONSTRATED IN OUR FIRST BILATERAL TLAKS ON ASSISTANCE IN WASHINGTON LAST FEBRUARY.

10. OUR COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS REMAIN SMALL BUT ARE GROWING AS NIGER'S URANIUM AND POSSIBLY OIL ATTRACT AMERICAN COMPANIES. THE CLIMATE FOR FOREIGN INVESTMENT IS FAVORABLE ALTHOUGH POTENTIAL INVESTORS WILL NEED PATIENCE WITH THE SLOW PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR OPERATING PERMITS.

11. OUR MAJOR EFFORT IS OF COURSE OUR CONTRIBUTION TO NIGER'S DEVELOPMENT. WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN REORIENTING OUR APPROACH FROM IMMEDIATE DROUGHT-RELIEF ASSISTANCE TO MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM PROGRAMS FOR RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT. A MAJOR CEREALS PRODUCTION PROGRAM HAS BEEN STARTED, INNOVATIVE PROJECTS IN REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION HAVE BEEN DESIGNED, AND WE ARE NOW WORKING ON PROJECTS INVOLVING LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS AND MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF US RESOURCES.

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R 191020Z JUL 76  
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4355  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NIAMEY 3300

12. THE PEACE CORPS IS PLAYING ITS UNIQUE PART IN THIS EFFORT. IT HAS BEEN HANDICAPPED BY INSUFFICIENT STAFFING AT THE TOP, BUT IT HAS MAINTAINED ITS MOMENTUM AND THE QUALITY OF VOLUNTEERS HAS REMAINED HIGH. VOLUNTEER ATTRITION IS LOW AND THE RE-ENLISTMENT RATE IS HIGH. IT IS FULLY ACCEPTED AND APPRECIATED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

13. OUR MODEST USIS PROGRAM IS HEALTHY AND EFFECTIVE IN AN APPROPRIATELY LOW-KEY WAY.

14. NIGER HAS GRADUALLY OVERCOME ITS RESERVATIONS ABOUT REGIONAL PROGRAMS AND COOPERATION. IT STILL PREFERS BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS BUT IT HAS COME TO CONFIDENTIAL

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RECOGNIZE THAT REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS CAN BE USEFUL. NIGER IS FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF CILSS AND THE CLUB DES AMIS DU SAHEL AND IT CAN BE COUNTED ON TO PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE IN THIS AREA.

15. WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US-- IN AN AFRICAN COUNTRY IN WHICH BY CONVENTIONAL DIPLOMATIC STANDARDS OUR INTERESTS ARE MINIMAL BUT IN WHICH WE ARE INVESTING SUBSTANTIAL US RESOURCES AND WITH WHICH WE HAVE BUILT A SOLID AND FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP?

16. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? OUR PRESENT POLICIES ARE BEARING FRUIT AND WE SHOULD CONTINUE DOWN THE SAME ROAD. THUS THE THRUST OF OUR DEVELOPMENT EFFORT IS SOUND BUT WE WILL NEED TO GIVE A SYMPATHETIC EAR TO NIGER'S TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS WHICH ARE PARTICULARLY ACUTE AND IMPORTANT TO DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE OF ITS LANDLOCKED STATUS. THE STYLE OF AND

CONTENT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP ARE RIGHT. THIS MEANS CONTINUING TO WORK CAREFULLY AND PATIENTLY WITH THE GOVERNMENT ON DEVELOPMENTAL MATTERS AND MULTILATERAL ISSUES, TO MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE, INCLUDING BILATERAL TALKS, AND TO CONSULT AS EQUALS.

17. OUR SUPPORT IS OF COURSE HELPING THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT STAY IN POWER. THIS, IN MY JUDGMENT, IS IN THE INTERESTS OF THE US. NIGER AND ITS LEADERS DO NOT CARRY MUCH WEIGHT IN AFRICA BUT US INTERESTS IN AFRICA ARE WELL SERVED BY WORKING WITH A COUNTRY WHERE WE ARE WELCOME AND APPRECIATED, WHERE WE CAN TRAVEL AND WORK IN PEACE, AND WHERE THE LEADERSHIP IS CONCENTRATING ON DOING THE BEST IT CAN FOR ITS PEOPLE IN A RESPONSIBLE WAY AF IS NOT RIDING OFF IN ALL DIRECTIONS ON WHITE OR OTHER COLOR HORSES. AFRICA WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE IN WHICH TO LEAVE IF THERE WERE MORE COUNTRIES LIKE NIGER. HECK

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